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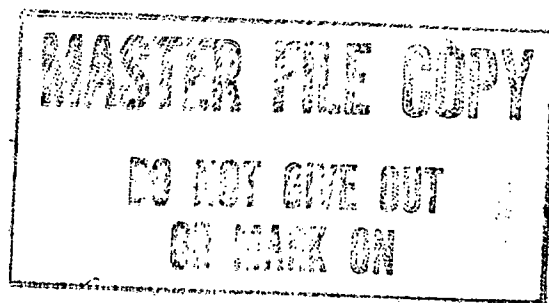
# Trends and Developments in Warsaw Pact Theater Forces and Doctrine Through the 1990s

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National Intelligence Estimate

Key Judgments

*These Key Judgments represent the views  
of the Director of Central Intelligence  
with the advice and assistance of the  
US Intelligence Community.*



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*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of these Key Judgments:*

- The Central Intelligence Agency
- The Defense Intelligence Agency
- The National Security Agency
- The Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

*also participating:*

- The Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army
- The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy
- The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

*The National Foreign Intelligence Board concurs, except as noted in the text.*

*The full text of this National Intelligence Estimate is being published separately with regular distribution.*

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## Key Judgments

We judge that the Soviet leadership's security policies will produce, during the period of this Estimate, the most significant changes in Soviet general purpose forces since Khrushchev's drastic force reductions. We further assess these policies are designed primarily to help the Soviet leadership revitalize the Soviet economy by shifting resources from defense to civilian sectors. We also believe decisions already undertaken signal a sharp divergence from existing force development trends, and they have necessitated a dramatic alteration in our forecast of future Soviet general purpose forces.<sup>1</sup>

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When Gorbachev came to power in 1985, he inherited a technologically backward economy that had experienced a decade of slowing growth characterized by industrial bottlenecks, labor and energy shortages, low and declining labor productivity, and decreasing efficiency of capital investment. Almost immediately after becoming General Secretary, he began to establish the political and ideological foundation for imposing his own priorities for resource allocations, clearly signaling a more intense competition between civilian and military needs. In doing so, he:

- Reaffirmed the traditional party authority for formulating military doctrine, which the Brezhnev regime had allowed to become dominated by the professional military hierarchy.
- Promoted a debate carried out in doctrinal terms over "reasonable sufficiency" and "defensive sufficiency," but which reflects a more fundamental examination of "How much is enough?" for defense.
- Attempted to dampen demand for defense spending by using arms control forums and foreign policy initiatives to reduce external threats.
- Broadened the Soviet concept of national security as part of the "new thinking" policy to give greater weight to its economic and political components.
- Embraced vigorously the position adopted by previous Soviet leaders that the impossibility of victory in nuclear war is basic to the political dimension of Soviet military doctrine, and that the pursuit of capabilities associated with achieving victory is too elusive and costly.

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Gorbachev's initial "ground-laying" objectives were largely achieved during his first few years in office. The regime did not order cutbacks in military programs immediately, however, preferring instead to reduce the

<sup>1</sup> See Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, alternative key judgment on page 7.

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burden by attempting to increase the efficiency of the defense sector. Despite these efforts to alleviate what Soviet officials describe as a "crisis" in the economy, after four years Gorbachev has failed to bring about a rebound in economic growth. Determined to succeed in his revitalization campaign and recognizing that the defense industrial sector offers an important source of additional help for his modernization program, Gorbachev, in 1988, decided to take stronger action to invest more in consumer-oriented projects. He evidently decided to act at that point because, in addition to the obvious lack of progress on economic programs and the rise in consumer dissatisfaction, the regime was faced with some key deadlines in the preparation of the 1991-95 Five-Year Plan. The results have become most vividly evident with announced policy initiatives designed primarily to help the Soviet leadership reinvigorate the economy by shifting resources from defense to the civil sector:

- Unilateral reductions and restructuring of Soviet general purpose forces that will cut 500,000 personnel from peacetime forces by January 1991, including 240,000 personnel from Soviet forces west of the Urals and 50,000 personnel from those in Central Europe. Forces remaining opposite NATO will be converted into a "clearly defensive" structure.
- Cuts in overall defense spending of 14.2 percent and defense production levels of 19.5 percent over the next two years that clearly reflect plans for a reduced force structure and reductions in rates of equipment modernization.
- Increases in the defense industry's direct contribution to production of consumer and civilian investment goods that will cut significantly into defense output. [REDACTED]

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Despite these dramatic actions and their apparent far-reaching implications, there remains considerable uncertainty about the durability and consequences of Gorbachev's initiatives on military matters. The amount of progress that is achieved on economic revival will largely determine Gorbachev's ability to sustain his reforms, his willingness to undertake additional initiatives, his standing with the party leadership, the support he receives in pursuing related programs, and his ability to control the impact of external factors that could impinge on his objectives. [REDACTED]

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Nevertheless, we believe it is highly likely that further decisions to reduce planned defense spending and to shift investment from defense to the civil sector will become apparent during the coming 13th Five-Year Plan (1991-95). We reaffirm the recent assessment in NIE 11-23-88 [REDACTED] December 1988, *Gorbachev's Economic Programs: The Challenges Ahead*

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that Gorbachev will divert additional resources from the defense sector to the civil sector. Over the longer term, Gorbachev probably will continue to impose constraints on the defense budget, and we judge that Soviet defense spending will continue to decline as a portion of GNP through the turn of the century. [REDACTED]

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We believe that the doctrinal concepts of "reasonable sufficiency" and "defensive sufficiency" have been articulated primarily to strengthen Gorbachev's control over defense resource decisions to support economic revival. We also believe that, by the turn of the century, these concepts probably will have become lasting features of Soviet national security policy, helping ensure continued party control over defense policy and defense spending. [REDACTED]

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Decisions by the USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies to reduce their general purpose forces and cut defense spending over the next two years would reverse the long-term trend of continuing growth in size and offensive capabilities of these forces. As a consequence of the planned cuts, the offensive capabilities of Warsaw Pact theater forces will decline through the first half of the 1990s. [REDACTED]

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We judge that the USSR will maintain large general purpose forces in the Atlantic-to-the-Urals zone to reinforce its status as a superpower, to deter aggression, to carry out wartime missions, and to underwrite its political objectives in the region. Within emerging economic constraints, we also believe the Soviets will modernize their still formidable general purpose forces. Furthermore, the Soviets will want to minimize the erosion of their relative military position due to both Warsaw Pact force reductions and continuing improvements in NATO military capabilities. Absent a far-reaching conventional arms control agreement, the Soviets will maintain the capability to conduct large-scale offensive operations deep into NATO territory but only after general mobilization. For the period of this Estimate, Warsaw Pact forces, led by the USSR, will remain the largest aggregation of military power in the world, and the Soviets will remain committed to the offensive as the preferred form of operations in wartime.

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Even with reductions in defense spending and procurement, the Soviets will continue to maintain the world's highest level of weapons production through the turn of the century. Although Soviet weapons projected through the 1990s will involve mostly evolutionary improvements over present types, a steady stream of better military technology will be available to Soviet force developers throughout this period. Indeed, the military expects *perestroyka* to yield significantly improved military technologies. [REDACTED]

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In addition to reductions in procurement funds, the significantly increased unit costs of high-technology weapon systems will further reduce traditionally high Soviet procurement rates. The increased effectiveness of these weapons, however, will reduce the number of such systems required to maintain the combat capabilities of Soviet general purpose forces. These factors will almost certainly lead to a less than 1-for-1 replacement rate for more advanced Soviet weapon systems over the course of this Estimate. As a consequence, we expect to see a continuation in the recent trends of declining production rates and deployment patterns for high-technology equipment. [ ]

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Since the late 1970s, the Soviets have improved their capabilities to conduct longer and more intensive conventional operations against NATO, including increased training for defensive operations against attacking NATO forces. The Soviets assess NATO to be a tougher military opponent on the conventional battlefield today than in past decades. Furthermore, they believe improvements in NATO doctrine and projected force modernization will make NATO an even more formidable conventional opponent over the course of this Estimate. [ ]

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Soviet pessimism regarding the utility of nuclear war and NATO's increased conventional capabilities have caused the Soviets to prepare for the possibility that a NATO-Pact war might remain conventional.<sup>2</sup> But they believe they must also prepare for nuclear war both to deter it and to wage it if it happens. Indeed, we judge that the Soviets still believe a NATO-Pact war is likely to escalate to the nuclear level due to NATO's doctrine of flexible response. Therefore, we expect the Soviets to maintain sizable nuclear forces subject to limitations imposed by current and future arms control agreements. Furthermore, we believe that, should an agreement with NATO governing quantities and modernization of short-range nuclear forces not materialize, the Soviets will continue to expand and modernize their tactical nuclear missile force by the mid-1990s. [ ]

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Following a trend we identified in NIE 11-14-85, we believe the overall peacetime readiness posture of Warsaw Pact general purpose forces opposite NATO during the period of this Estimate will be designed to accommodate the following:

- Primary emphasis will be placed on the ability to mobilize and deploy large reinforcements before hostilities, not on the ability of forward forces to initiate a quick, unreinforced attack.

<sup>2</sup> Soviet chemical and biological warfare capabilities are fully considered in NIE 11-17-86 [ ] August 1986, *Soviet Chemical and Biological Warfare Program*. This Estimate concurs with the judgments held in that document. [ ]

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- In line with the Warsaw Pact's recent decisions to reduce and restructure its theater forces, these forces will be maintained at sufficient readiness to defend against a sudden attack and act as a defensive shield to allow for the full mobilization and deployment of Pact forces. [REDACTED]

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We consider Pact initiation of hostilities without mobilization to be extremely unlikely. We cannot, however, rule out the possibility that the Pact might initiate hostilities from a condition of partial mobilization if it perceives an opportunity to achieve decisive results against NATO, or a need to forestall NATO from achieving decisive results against the Pact.

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Our judgments regarding Warsaw Pact sustainability in a future war with NATO differ substantially from those made several years ago. In 1985 we stated unconditionally that the Warsaw Pact logistic structure in Central Europe could support 60 to 90 days of theater offensive operations against NATO. We now judge that overall Pact sustainability is a function of the resilience of NATO's forward defenses. If NATO's forward defenses were to collapse within three days of intensive operations, ammunition stocks in the Western Theater of Military Operations (TMO) would be sufficient to support the Pact's Theater Strategic Operation for up to 90 days. If, on the other hand, Pact forces were to require at least two weeks of high-intensity operations to achieve a decisive breakthrough, the Pact would not have enough ammunition in the Western TMO to sustain a theater strategic operation beyond a total of about 30 to 45 days. If confronted with the prospect of some shortfall in ammunition supply, the Pact would move additional ammunition stocks from elsewhere to the Western TMO, or adjust war plans to avoid or at least minimize any adverse impact on combat operations. [REDACTED]

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Soviet general purpose forces are fielding new weapons of virtually every type, and we believe this trend will continue through the end of the century. Motivated by the need to counter NATO's deep-attack, high-technology conventional weapons and extended-battlefield concepts, for example, the Soviets have been able to match or exceed NATO's capabilities in nearly every major ground forces' weapons category. Rates of equipment modernization probably will decrease through the end of the century as the Soviets reduce defense production to free resources for the civil sector. However, we expect that the Soviets will resist cutting substantially research, development, testing, and evaluation in an effort to close the military technology gap with the West. As in the past, Soviet forces in the Western TMO will likely be the first to receive new equipment. [REDACTED]

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The Ground Forces are the largest element of the Soviet armed forces, and their development determines the overall direction of Soviet theater forces development. We see no evidence that this will change. We now judge, based on the plans for reductions in force levels, defense spending and military procurement, that a 25-year period of Soviet Ground Forces growth has ended, and the decline in their overall size could go beyond that already announced. We further judge that a resumption of growth in the Ground Forces is highly unlikely before the turn of the century. [REDACTED]

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In order to meet the targets for reductions set by Gorbachev for January 1991, Soviet Ground Forces will be considerably restructured over the next two years, but we cannot confidently predict their final form. Before Gorbachev's cuts, the Soviets had begun to move toward combined-arms formations. Although the final balance of tanks and mechanized infantry is still in flux, we believe that combined-arms doctrine will guide Soviet force restructuring through the 1990s. [REDACTED]

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Despite cuts in defense spending and procurement, we judge the Soviets will continue to modernize their Air Forces, albeit more slowly than in the past. Beginning in the mid-1990s and continuing through the turn of the century, the Soviets are expected to introduce light, medium, and Stealth bombers, Stealth and non-Stealth fighter-bombers, and at least one new fighter. The announced reduction of 800 combat aircraft from the Air Forces, however, signals a significant change in the pattern of force expansion of the past two decades. We now judge that the Soviet Air Forces will remain at their post-reduction levels until after the end of the century. [REDACTED]

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Soviet naval general purpose forces continue to have the major missions of protecting the Soviet missile-launching submarine force and defending the USSR against NATO strategic and theater forces. Although the Navy can be expected to bear a share of spending reductions, major emphasis will be placed on improving antisubmarine and antisurface combatant operations, gradually modernizing Soviet naval aviation, and increasing the availability of sea-based airpower as larger aircraft carriers enter service during the 1990s. Support for land TMOs remains a primary wartime task of naval theater forces, and we project a slow continuation of several organizational and weapon trends that should provide land theater commanders with more capable naval forces for combined-arms operations. [REDACTED]

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Non-Soviet Warsaw Pact defense industries have been expanding and producing a larger share of the NSWP military inventory. But announced defense spending cuts and the weakened state of NSWP economies will cause military production in the NSWP countries to decline during the period of this Estimate. We also judge that NSWP forces will fall further



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behind Soviet forces in technology and organization during this same period. The relative contribution of the NSWP armies to overall Warsaw Pact military capability is also likely to decline somewhat over the next few years. [ ]

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A major objective of the Soviet leadership's current foreign policy is to reduce political support in the NATO countries for increased defense spending to support NATO's force modernization program. Gorbachev will continue to negotiate for conventional arms control agreements to slow Western military modernization and facilitate his own defense program. In addition, Warsaw Pact foreign policy over the period of this Estimate will seek to weaken the position of the United States and Canada within the North Atlantic Alliance. [ ]

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**Alternative Key Judgment.** The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, while recognizing the significance of the ongoing changes in the Soviet Union, believes the likelihood of large unilateral reductions in military expenditures beyond those already proclaimed by Soviet leaders is not as high as implied by the majority view in the Estimate, particularly for the longer term. Notwithstanding the potential importance of new developments in Soviet military policies discussed in this Estimate, the Director, DIA, believes present evidence and future uncertainties make the elements of continuity in Soviet military policy as important as the changes for US national security and defense planning. [ ]

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